She Ties Her Tongue: The Problems of Cultural Paralysis in Postcolonial Criticism

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WHILE THE INCEPTION of postcolonial criticism marked a liberating rejection of the self-fulfilling criteria of a Eurocentric, patriarchal canon, if we now reflect with a critical eye on the effects of increasing centrality and popularity (albeit in the name of difference and marginality) within this growing discipline, its own orthodoxies and prejudices demand attention. Although postcolonial scholarship developed in opposition to prescriptive modes of thought, the consolidation and institutionalization of its works would seem to have generated in some respects an unhelpful homogenization of political intent and a stifling consensus of "good" practice. It might not be an exaggeration to suggest that postcolonialism has unwittingly become its own nemesis. Does not the imperative to celebrate, alongside the "political untouchability" and the terrorism of cultural sensitivity, generate a spectre of the "model," acceptable postcolonial response, which both chokes critics and arrests the possibilities for making meanings? The relentlessly positive reception afforded resistant subjects and rebellious discourses, the canonization of contemporary postcolonial women (writers), and the general academic conscience-pricking that have dominated postcolonial studies may have functioned (and continue to function) as important gestures against a profile of self-satisfied and defensive Eurocentric thought, but I would argue that they have a limited, if not an exhausted, value for those working within, rather than against, the field of postcolonial criticism and theory.

If postcolonialism's battle for intellectual and institutional recognition has a record of successful campaigns, it also has its casualties. In its venture to give voice to the silenced, little consid-

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eration was given to the fact that its own vociferousness might be drowning out more subtle tones still striving to be heard and still marginalized by the demands of academic recognition and the attendant search for a politically flawless portfolio. It is perhaps not difficult to locate the politics of this dominant postcolonialism when we consider that among these less-defined cadences are Creole and settler writings, those early twentieth-century writings that often rest uncomfortably on the cusp of coloniality, and writings that elect to work with rather than against European models. Again, such an emphasis was significant to the project of redressing the political and cultural biases of colonial discourse, but the persistent foregrounding of unproblematically postcolonial texts is not without consequences. Indeed, it is rather ironic that it is certain contemporary postcolonial scholarship, with its labouring of voicelessness and absence, that has served to license the neglect of some of its most fascinating (early) archives and voices, which ostensibly failed to fulfil anti-imperialist agendas. An example of this can be found in the common perception that postcolonial women's writing only emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, a misapprehension that reflects both a particular definition of *bona fide* postcoloniality and the prominence given to contemporary and metropolitan texts.

In current postcolonial scholarship, nearly all critical attention remains focused on those writers and works that show an obvious disengagement from colonial culture, either through a geographical distance (writings of exile and migration being particularly popular) or through a historical one. Writings that are distanced from colonialism in this way often offer models of identity formation and of aesthetic innovation that can be identified as emerging either "after" or "outside" colonial paradigms. In other words, they are more comfortably "post" than they are colonial. Perhaps most crucially for the future of the discipline, this preference for perfect political credentials alongside the propensity to deal in perpetual marginality and voicelessness not only condemns writers to dismal and oppressed self-defining narratives but burdens readers with a baggage of unresolved cultural sensitivities, and critics with a tireless round of congratulations and careful critiques.

It is my contention that a field of inquiry that could continue helpfully and excitingly to be unsettling to intellectual and academic orthodoxies is in danger of being settled prematurely by wider political imperatives, institutional pressures, and an entrenched cultural protocol. At the heart of this issue lie the questions concerning who is allowed to speak and what manner of voice is permitted. Using Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* as my textual locale, I am concerned with exploring some of the issues at stake in current postcolonial criticism and in particular the problem of cultural paralysis, which, I suggest, is a major political and intellectual impasse currently facing the discipline. My aim is not to admonish readers to suffer more anxiety, nor to have more confidence when reading postcolonial texts, neither is it to attack celebratory readings or to encourage more critical ones, but rather to think through the implications and consequences of these responses.

Too often, anxieties about approaching texts with a sensitive cultural valency can function as yet another reason for scholars to license their neglect, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak so neatly points out:

> The sort of breast-beating which stops the possibility of social change is to say, "I'm only a white male and cannot speak as a feminist," or, "I'm only a white male, I cannot speak for the blacks." . . . What we are asking for is that the hegemonic discourses, the holders of hegemonic discourse should de-hegemonize their position of the other rather than simply say, "O.K., sorry, we are just very good white people, therefore we do not speak for the blacks." That's the kind of breast-beating that is left behind at the threshold and then business goes on as usual. (121)

However, "de-hegemonization" can be a tricky process, and the study of postcolonial literatures clearly should foreground questions about positions (theoretical, ideological) and about the legitimacy of readings if it is to achieve this end. It is important to acknowledge that for readers whose study of postcolonial literatures involves readings across cultures and especially across the ex-colonial/postcolonial divide, questions concerning the right to read are highly charged.

It might be easy to respond to the proposition that "we" (British/ European/ Western/ white readers) should only study

our "own" literature with the line about shutting down the French and German departments and closing all options on the eighteenth century. Indeed, there may be some sense to this line of argument, but it does not work so freely within the context of postcolonial cultures, where colonial history and the attendant schooling in European literature and literary criticism have been exercises in intellectual brutality. Indeed, the withdrawal and apprehension of cross-cultural readers often emerges not from their uncomfortable awareness of this legacy but from their inability to respond productively to it. The notion that "we" should limit inquiries to "our own" literature so often betrays a fear of confronting the questions "what is our own?" and, even more crucially, "who constitutes this 'we'?" It is perhaps with this challenging concentration on our own positions as readers that we should begin, not paralysed by insecurities concerning inappropriate knowledge and fears of misreadings but aware of and excited by the persistent uncertainty regarding acceptable ways to read and permissible theoretical parameters. To this end we must register the effects of placing power and responsibility along the writer/text/reader dynamic.

In his article "Constitutive Graphonomy: A Postcolonial Theory of Literary Writing," W. D. Ashcroft has suggested that "the political impetus of postcolonial theory has been to focus meaning at the site of production" (59). Indeed, beyond an analysis of resistance and counter-culture that might engender this focus, it would appear that those involved in postcolonial studies often prioritize the point of production because of their unwillingness to condone the "death of the author" as possessor of textual "truths." The tendency to give authority over to the writer's (cultural or political) intentions or to those readings produced by "native" critics signifies that postcolonial (and more acutely cross-cultural) readers are unsure about the availability of meaning within these texts and only feel comfortable with meanings that are culturally determined from the "inside." Certainly, the freedom to read and the continuum of meaning are more troubling concepts with reference to postcolonial texts and become more highly charged against a backdrop of cultural imperialism. Nevertheless, while a reluctance to embrace the "freedom" of

meaning within postcolonial studies may result in a positive questioning of poststructuralism's sometimes-apolitical tendencies, it can also function as an intellectual shortcut that bypasses the issues of referential insecurity and ideological bias in its search for the culturally legitimate meaning.

Clearly there is a value to "insider" readings, which might well offer insights not available to cross-cultural readers, but should they be valued as better, as equal, or simply as different from those that "outside" readers might produce? While meaning may well be culturally determined, surely it is not determined according to fixed or stable cultural positions. When we attempt to authenticate a writing or reading by virtue of its cultural orientation, we immediately fix that culture in a way that is unhelpful and betrays the very nature of cultural complexity within postcolonial societies, which we are at odds to point out elsewhere. Moreover, we take the "authentic" reading to represent certain cultural norms without fully accounting for the personal, educational, and institutional experience of each critic or writer in particular. In other words, when we attempt to stabilize culturally or fix the processes of signification (through reference to primary or secondary voices) are we not reverting to some kind of essentialism that we are usually so keen to condemn?

The problems of placing the "power to tell" in the hands of the writer or "native critic" are not only associated with the exclusivity of meaning that can emerge but are also related to the way in which we are simplifying our understanding of cultural forms in order to license a degree of validity and security that an "outside" reader can grasp. By weighting the culturally "safe" participant as the focus for attention, the cross-cultural reader is simplifying the locus of meaning and thereby reducing the complexity of the text and her or his own engagement with it.

However, the advent of the self-conscious reader within postcolonial studies can also be problematic. If one of the most vexed questions for the cross-cultural reader to address is "How do I avoid accusations of assumed universalism or appropriation?," one of the most popular strategies is to "bare all" and to identify an individual position, and its limitations, before commencing any analysis. Yet I have problems with the strategic preface, "As a

white European feminist. . . ." After all, I am not really confident that this is what I am, or at least what I always am, or that even if I decided that it was what I was just now, whether I could maintain such a stable mode of identification through the course of a single piece of writing, or that even if I did, whether my readers would share any consensus on a term such as "feminist." Attempts to fix a participant in the act of cross-cultural communication is somehow to avoid the real questions concerning the negotiation of meaning that such an act should provoke. Although it is evidently important for readers to be self-conscious, as the apparently neutral or absent reader may well be the naïve and undiscriminating Eurocentric reader, the "As a . . ." strategy can become habitual, unthinking, and thus "meaningless." Moreover, a disclaimer can operate paradoxically as a way of claiming all the power in achieving meaning for the reader and of thus erasing issues of cultural difference altogether. A declaration of limits can actually work as a legitimation device, suggesting that any reading (rather than many readings) is "equally valid" without consideration being given to the possibilities of multiple or contested meanings. It would appear, then, that an awareness of the various positions of reader and writer can be helpful and interesting, but that such awareness should not be reduced to competition, with readings of postcolonial texts developing into a bidding system in which cultural and ideological credentials are listed as the markers for deciding who can claim the most "authentic" ownership of meaning.

If some of the dilemmas associated with cultural paralysis can be traced to this preoccupation with the credentials for the postcolonial text and critic, then a little book called *A Small Place*, which has puzzled, infuriated, and fiercely engaged everyone I know who has read it, provides an interesting (counter) discourse on postcolonial cultural protocol. As I hope to demonstrate, this text manages to press the panic buttons of various cultural positions and to utilize irony—a particularly slippery if not subjective trope—in order to pose effectively questions concerning the right to speak for and to speak of, and the consequences of these practices in terms of the politics of postcolonialism.

It might be helpful to begin by considering why it is that of all Jamaica Kincaid's works, *A Small Place* has received the least critical attention. The generic definition of this text clearly has been crucial to its reception—it has been published variously as autobiography, politics, history, sociology (but not, as far as I know, as fiction); such reading strategies, which emphasize the factual and historical content, predetermine the status and particular purchase granted to the narrative voice. Indeed, on a first reading, it is not difficult to appreciate why this text has been described as "uncompromising," as an "incontestable denunciation," and is commonly read transparently as a tirade against the colonial legacy and the neo-colonial tourist industry (Ferguson 131-38). In its simplest guise, *A Small Place* is a most ungenerous reconstruction of the tourist's-eye-view of Antigua and a simultaneous commentary on the ruinous effects of colonial and postcolonial projects on the island; the second reading powerfully realigns the vision of the first. However, while in one sense this text is pure polemic—a strident and lucid denunciation of tourism and the comforting belief that colonialism is "post"—just under the straightforward indignation of the narrative voice, which claims with confidence to identify criminal from victim, and right from wrong, lies an indeterminacy of meaning, crucially linked to the undecidability about where this voice is speaking from, and for whom.

Following on from Giovanni Covi, who has provided an insightful analysis of the aesthetic strategies of this text, drawing attention to the "faked, primitive child-like voice" (94) and to what lies "under the pretended naïveté of the speaking voice" (94), I wish to explore the politics and the ethics of *A Small Place*. I want to suggest that one way to reveal "what lies beneath" is to read *A Small Place* as a consummate work of ventriloquism that deploys a whole series of voices in order to debate the values and limitations of the cultural discourses and positions associated with postcolonialism. In order to present some evidence for this reading, I wish to call on Nicholas Thomas's engaging and careful "anthropological" work, *Colonialism's Culture*, and in particular on Thomas's analysis of colonialism as "a cultural process; its discoveries and trespasses are imagined and energized through

signs, metaphors and narratives; even what would seem its purest moments of profit and violence have been mediated and enframed by structures of meaning" (2).

To my mind, Kincaid displays a keen awareness of the way in which the culture of colonialism (in Thomas's terms) persisted, as discursive structures were inherited alongside the more visible institutional power structures. In this way, *A Small Place* not only explores the continuity of corrupt political and economic practice in Antigua after Independence but more crucially plays on and with the cultural practices of writing and reading that are complicit to such perpetuation. Kincaid re-enters this culture, rehearsing its rhetoric and idioms to produce a multi-accentuated text that is both a direct political statement on neo-colonialism and an ironic commentary on the politics of postcolonialism—the two operating simultaneously.

Although the irony of the piece is subtly sustained, it is explosive to its meaning and transforms the text from a monologic attack on the tourist by the "native" into a disturbing series of cultural observations directed at a range of targets. As Linda Hutcheon has explored in "Circling the Downspout of Empire," irony often functions as a key subversive trope within postcolonial criticism. However, in *A Small Place*, one of the discourses that Kincaid is "working within . . . and contesting at the same time" (Hutcheon 171) is that of postcolonialism itself.

The text's most immediate irony is achieved by the narrator's "trying on" of the colonial tongue, which glibly appropriates its object of study. From the very beginning, this text parades an astonishingly arrogant propensity to speak for others, as the narrator assumes the right to speak for the tourist: "If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see" (3). Moreover, this assured voice (which masquerades as innocent) assumes all visitors, indeed all readers, to be tourists and cultural voyeurs of a kind, by implicating "you," the reader, within "you," the tourist. This adoption of colonial discourse's unproblematic "speaking for" forces the postcolonial reader to experience the process of being constructed, unfixing her or his desired position as reconstructed reader. Yet the irony latent in this voice makes any attempt to fix its moral orientation impossible, and the text's

drive towards destabilizing positions becomes clearer as Kincaid unfixes her own position with the same ironic tone. During the persuasive and sardonic account of the tourist's myopic vision that opens the text, the narrator suddenly turns with "[t]hey [the Antiguans] do not like you. *They do not like me!*" (17). Although this second formulation functions as an absent echo in the tourist's mind, it is also a record of the irony inherent in Kincaid's vituperative attack on tourists, as she herself catches sight of the island from the plane window, a tourist of sorts, having left Antigua at the age of 17.

Probably the most sensitive and hostile of Kincaid's works, *A Small Place* refuses its own soft target of the tourist in favour of a range of more contentious offenders. This is not to suggest that the book shies away from a condemnation of tourism, but rather that it probes more thoroughly and painfully the question of responsibility for postcolonial failures (economic, social, and psychological). As Helen Tiffin has pointed out, *A Small Place* is a "direct address to Americans, English (or worse, Europeans)" (36), but it is not just a word in the ears of those who go in search of sunshine and exotica; it is also an address to those paralysed by liberal guilt. This passage, for example, explicitly addresses the implied reader/cultural voyeur: "Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seem to have learned from you is how to corrupt our societies and how to be tyrants? You will have to accept that this is mostly your fault" (35). Surely the narrative voice here presents an exaggerated version, almost a pastiche, of the postcolonial text that plays upon white readers' *Angst*. Moreover, the immediacy and tenacity of the response to this cultural trigger would seem to disclose the acute anxiety, if not critical paralysis, on the part of the cross-cultural reader, who would accept willingly her or his assigned position as oppressor and not dare to read such a statement as ironic or provocative.

By planting such an extreme version of the manifesto guiding certain postcolonial texts, Kincaid is able to disclose the way in which meaning is paralysed by cultural censorship. Frozen in a moment of guilt, "outside" critics of postcolonial literatures are too often prevented from asking themselves "what is the value of this text?" because they are so obsessed with the dilemma of

whether they have the right to ask that question, or are so assured by its ability to uncover their liberal guilt that they need not question its value further. Equally, this statement is a means to scrutinize the credentials and value of those postcolonial texts that rely on their readers' guilt. By presenting the guiding motivation of these texts in such crude terms, the narrator lays bare a political position that has been both significant and successful in the battle to rewrite the script of colonial encounter in order to provoke a reconsideration of the merits of this strategy.

It is through this unveiling and opening of the seams with which postcolonialism has sought to join writers and readers, ex-colonized and ex-colonizers, that *A Small Place* bids for a thorough consideration of how all groups might now ethically and effectively respond to each other. By dislocating the agendas to which many postcolonial readers and writers have subscribed, in addition to the more obvious misapprehensions of the tourist's version of cross-cultural encounter, Kincaid's text draws attention to the ways in which political paralysis might have become the unwitting bedfellow of political untouchability, and thus forces a consideration of how within postcolonial situations (both textual and political) cultural analysis and interaction can be achieved helpfully.

However, if *A Small Place* refuses the easy option in terms of "speaking against" by constantly extending its range of targets, then it is equally uneasy about "speaking for" and offering an insider, legitimate, unambiguous meaning. Indeed, it seems to me that Kincaid is most fierce in her address to the Antiguan people, whom she censures for failing to accept responsibility and to engage critically with their present situation. It is interesting that in one interview Kincaid confidently declared, "[t]he thing that I am branded with and the thing that I am denounced for, I claim as my own. I am illegitimate, I am ambiguous" ("Interview" 129); she has been widely chastised for daring to write in such an ambivalent fashion about this "small place," her birthplace, Antigua, while living in the distant and more affluent Maine, USA. The ambiguity of her own cultural location, to which she draws attention in this text, fuels the debate over the value of her text—her perceived betrayal of her "cultural home"

itself betraying the expectation of the postcolonial writer's duty to speak for her or his community. It is not an expectation that Kincaid is willing to fulfil, as she writes in *A Small Place*:

> In a small place, people cultivate small events. The small event is isolated, blown up, turned over and over, and then absorbed into the everyday, so that at any moment it can and will roll off the inhabitants of the small place's tongues. For the people in a small place, every event is a domestic event; the people in a small place cannot see themselves in a larger picture, they cannot see that they may be part of a chain of something, anything. (52-53)

This "small place-small mind" equivalence becomes almost a refrain during the second half of the text, reflecting on a mind-set that is also frozen in a particular mode of response and cannot free itself from colonial paradigms.

After a sustained commentary on the linguistic, geographical, and moral imposition of the English during Antigua's period of colonial rule, the narrator declares her anguished but futile response to the phenomenon of cultural dispossession, still pertinent to the nominally "postcolonial" Antigua of the 1980s:

> Nothing can erase my rage—not an apology, not a large sum of money, not the death of the criminal—for this wrong can never be made right, and only the impossible can make me still: can a way be found to make what happened not have happened? And so look at this prolonged visit to the bile duct that I am making, look at how bitter, how dyspeptic just to sit and think about these things makes me. (32)

Although exercising the right to speak from an angry and unreconstructed position is a significant and challenging aspect of this text, again the split signification that the ironic tongue enacts also allows an articulation of this position to function as a criticism. *A Small Place* highlights the problems of a postcolonial condition that simply involves a reiteration of external oppression, as this can operate as an excuse for those who wish to behave as neo-colonialists on their own territory and also can effect an entrapment of consciousness that offers limiting conceptual and ontological possibilities. It is also, as I have suggested, critical of those who "trade off" this condition, including writers and readers of postcolonial texts.

By staging the problems of being culturally paralysed and questioning how ethical it is to position yourself as eternally,

unalterably sinner or sinned upon within a colonial dialectic of oppressor/victim, *A Small Place* is pointing to an unhelpful reliance on fixed models of cultural experience and an entrapment within forms of analysis that ultimately deny the possibilities of different forms of cultural interaction. It would seem that troubling the beliefs and positions that comfort us (whether "we" be the myopic tourist, the arrogant colonizer, the oppressed ex-colonized, or the enlightened postcolonial reader) is the text's most consistent quality. By doing violence to certain modes of perception and discourse, the narrative cautions us that to be aware of wrongs and to apportion (or to accept) blame are not adequate responses but rather are markers of the limitations of certain liberal and nationalist projects that have failed to effect any change in the particular ways of positioning each other across ex-colonizer/ex-colonial divides.

Although *A Small Place* may issue an imperative for change through its aggressive dissatisfaction with entrenched modes of being in and of addressing this situation, it does not clear a new path forward or offer us new and better positions; rather, it dismantles the very moral and political divides that have helped postcolonial critics to advance their work. In contrast to the period of colonial rule during which, as Kincaid so succinctly points out, ethical divides were far clearer—"We felt superior, for we were so much better behaved and we were full of grace, and these people were so badly behaved and they were so completely empty of grace" (30)—the postcolonial period offers no such comforting moral ground. It is my suggestion that this text, which has managed to hit the sore points of both British and Antiguan readers, generates a significant level of agitation within its readers in order to make us aware of the inadequacies of postcolonial scholarship and of liberal and national politics, which very often retain the concentration on colonial paradigms and tend to consolidate the historical divisions between the powerful and the powerless, those generating discourse and those being inscribed by it, rather than seeking to dismantle them. The text's candid narration of colonial history makes it clear that we must not ignore what has happened, but its equally harsh rendition of the present as paralysing "political perfection"

strongly suggests that neither must we rely on a reiteration or a confession of past wrongs (both moral and representational) as a way forward. However, if it does not provide us with alternatives to these impasses within the text, is it helpful in any way to those of us already uncomfortably aware of the problems inherent in postcolonial studies?

As *A Small Place* spirals towards a climax (a narrative movement effected by the constant turning to and turning on issues and peoples), one might anticipate a final conflict if reading the text simply as a polemic against neo-colonialism. Yet the final statement is both a fusion and a radical disclosure of the interests of the text in process:

> Eventually, the masters left, in a kind of way; eventually, the slaves were freed, in a kind of way. The people in Antigua now, the people who really think of themselves as Antiguans (and the people who would immediately come to your mind when you think about what Antiguans might be like; I mean, supposing you were to think about it), are the descendants of those noble and exalted people, the slaves. Of course, *the whole thing is*, once you cease to be a master, once you throw off your master's yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human being, and all the things that adds up to. So, too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings. (80-81; emphasis added)

I would suggest that this final statement is an act of significant provocation that transforms the text's focus on discursive practice in order to demand a consideration of what lies beyond discourse. It functions as a will to participate, to react, to object, to be indignant, to take on the responsibility of freeing ourselves from these cultural dead-ends. It is in this way that *A Small Place* approaches some of the most vexing questions within literary criticism, and postcolonial literary criticism in particular—"where is the subject outside of discourse?" and "what is the possible relationship between discourse and agency, between postcolonial scholarship and postcolonial politics?"

It is perhaps through the ventriloquism of this text that we can locate one answer to these questions, as the ironic appropriation of another's voice allows the fracture between discourse and the speaking subject to be glimpsed and a possible point at which

agency can begin to be identified. In this way, Kincaid's text reiterates the radical possibilities of mimicry, to which Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Homi Bhabha have pointed, by providing a complex example of the way in which engaging in an other's discourse need not repeat the other's values nor assume the position assigned to you within that discourse. However, *A Small Place* also provides a more fundamental dismantling of cultural positions and projects and thus forces us to respond to the movement that is occurring, both literally and intellectually, in terms of definitions of cultural identity, and incites us to claim agency through these possibilities for change. One of the most important qualities of this text is the positive contingency of identity, which Stuart Hall identifies in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora":

> Cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being." It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. (394)

Kincaid's evocative and effective blending of realism and optimism, of the imperative to expose neo-colonial projects and yet not to become entrapped or limited by them, does not deny the significance of historical dispossession, or the desire and the will to belong, but rather calls for a revaluation of historical narratives and cultural positionings.

My suggestion is that *A Small Place* does not just ask for an end to economic imperialism and the legitimation of feelings of anger and retribution (although clearly these are crucial functions of the text) but that its most urgent demand is for an end to entrenched modes of cultural positioning and for ground on which a postcolonial individual can be more than just a positioned subject or a subject position. In other words, it tries to be more than a discourse on a discourse and to disclose how postcolonial scholarship's concentration on identifying positioned subjects can often become more of an interest in discourse than in postcolonial subjects. It also draws attention to the way in which much postcolonial writing that has sought to react against

assigned positions by inscribing the fullness of lives and subjectivities and the intricacies of the cultural codes of the formerly colonized merely has traded in the same limiting modes of representation and ideas of culturally authentic and stable identities. In this way, the text makes a demand on both a Western readership that wishes only to be reassured of its sensitivity to the oppression of others and its worthiness of mind as well as on the population of a small place, an ex-colonized society, which wishes to point ceaselessly to the evils of colonization as the *raison d'être* of all of its problems and misjudgements, to widen their fields of vision and perceive the constraints of consolidating and concentrating on only their own positions.

Perhaps most importantly, *A Small Place* issues a powerful reminder that the very attraction of this area of study is that issues are highly charged and that the problems and the texts that we address have a significance beyond intellectual amusement. It is perhaps only by daring to look beyond the politics of the academy and the constraints of "correctness" that we have constructed for ourselves that we can avoid being petrified by the difficult moral and political questions that postcolonial studies can and should pose. Kincaid's text may well be a prolonged meditation on tourism, but it most powerfully articulates the need for postcolonial subjects, readers and writers, to be open to a mobility, and a journeying, that is the very antithesis of tourism, which involves intellectual, even emotional, movement, negotiation, and relocation. Although such a journey may appear hazardous to our intellectual comfort and our political well-being, it may offer a way out of paralysis and towards more ethical, interesting, and empowering possibilities for the definition of both self and other.

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